

**REMARKS**

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the specification and claims by the current amendment. The attached page(s) is captioned "**Version With Markings To Show Changes Made.**"

Claims 1-5 have been considered and a restriction requirement made by the Examiner in the outstanding Official Action. Applicant elects with traverse claims 1-4 in Group I directed to the claimed method. However, applicant respectfully traverses the rejection, as the packaged article is merely an implementation of the specifically recited process. Reconsideration of the restriction requirement and the Examiner's allegation of separate inventions is respectfully requested.

Applicant appreciates the Examiner's call to applicant's undersigned representative on December 5, 2001, and regrets that instructions were not available in the Examiner's limited timeframe for a response.

Applicant also appreciates the Examiner's confirmation of applicant's claim for priority and receipt of the certified copy of the priority document. Applicant notes that the original filing of this application on March 6, 2000 included a PTO Form 1449 and International Search Report. Confirmation of the Examiner's consideration of this prior art is respectfully requested.

Applicant has elected with traverse the invention of Group I and originally submitted claims 1-4. However, applicant includes newly written claims 6-18 which more clearly specify the subject matter of applicant's invention. Thus, claims 1-4 and claims 6-18 are directed to the invention of Group I, i.e. the method for vacuum

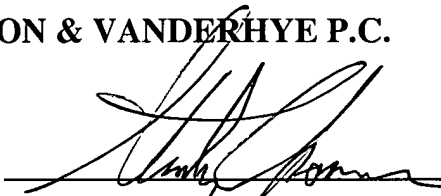
packaging. Consideration of the newly written claims on the merits is respectfully requested.

Having responded to all objections and rejections set forth in the outstanding Official Action, it is submitted that claims 1-4 and 6-18 are in condition for allowance and notice to that effect is respectfully solicited. In the event the Examiner is of the opinion that a brief telephone or personal interview will facilitate allowance of one or more of the above claims, he is respectfully requested to contact applicant's representative.

Respectfully submitted,

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**VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE**

**IN THE SPECIFICATION**

Page 1, between the title and line 1:

**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

**1. Field of the Invention**

Page 1, above the paragraph beginning at line 4:

**2. Discussion of Prior Art**

Page 2, above the paragraph beginning at line 23:

**SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

Page 5, above the paragraph beginning at line 25:

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

Page 6, above the paragraph beginning at line 11:

**DETAILED DISCUSSION OF EMBODIMENTS**

**IN THE CLAIMS**

--6. (*New*) A method for the vacuum packaging of articles including at least the steps of:

creating a plurality of recesses in a backing board; positioning at least one article on the backing board; placing a film substantially over the at least one article; and using a vacuum packaging machine to substantially package the at least one article, the at least

one article being situated between the backing board and the film, wherein the thickness of the backing board is at least 2mm,

the method being characterised by applying a bonding agent adapted to cause the film to bond with said backing board to the backing board and by preventing the film from bonding with the backing board in a region adjacent to and extending around the or each article.

7. *(New)* A method in Claim 6, wherein the bonding agent is air dried before the film is bonded to the backing board.

8. *(New)* A method as claimed in Claim 6, comprising heating the film to cause the film to bond with the backing board.

9. *(New)* A method as claimed in Claim 6, comprising heating the film and applying suction to a face of the backing board opposite the article(s), substantially simultaneously so that the bonding agent causes the film to bond with the backing board around the or each article to substantially seal in the or each article.

10. *(New)* A method as claimed in Claim 6, wherein the step of preventing the film from bonding with the backing board is achieved by applying the bonding agent to only part of the surface of the backing board.

11. *(New)* A method as claimed in Claim 10, wherein the bonding agent is not applied to a region where an article is to be positioned, said region being greater than a corresponding cross section of the article.

12. *(New)* A method as claimed in Claim 6, wherein the step of preventing the film from bonding with the backing board is achieved by masking the bonding agent in those regions where the film is not to bond with the backing board.

13. *(New)* A method as claimed in Claim 6, comprising applying an ink to the backing board.

14. *(New)* A method as claimed in Claim 6, wherein ink is applied to the surface of the backing board to which bonding agent has been applied, the bonding agent having been allowed to dry before the ink is applied, the ink being applied to the areas of the backing board on which the or each article is intended to be placed.

15. *(New)* A method as claimed in Claim 14, wherein the ink is applied to the backing board by printing means so as to provide the backing board with the shape of the or each article superimposed in ink thereupon, the or each superimposed ink shape being greater in area than a corresponding cross-section of the associated article.

16. *(New)* A method as claimed in Claim 15, wherein digital photography is used in the printing of the shape(s) on the backing board.

17. *(New)* A method as claimed in Claim 6, wherein the recesses are created on the backing board by punching holes at least part way thereinto.

18. *(New)* A method as claimed in Claim 6, wherein the recesses are created before the application of the bonding agent.--